
BALLYRAGGETT AND DISTRICT

(By *T. Lyng*)

BALLYRAGGETT is in Irish : Beal Atha Ragat, which means "Pass of Ragged's Ford," the "pass" being the upper valley of the Nore, lying between the Coolcashin hills and the range of hills that runs from Ballinakill to Conahy through Ballimartin. The ford was the broad and shallow part of the river at the present Ballyragget bridge. Ragged is the Norman-French "le Ragot," "the fat," or "comical" and refers here to the Norman settler, Richard le Ragged, who held lands in the vicinity of Ballyragget at the beginning of the 13th century.

Essex passed through Ballyragget in 1599, after his defeat by Owny O'More, and an account of the journey refers to the place as "a passage called Ballyregate of a castle belonging to Viscount Mountgarret."

The town of Ballyragget took shape between 1700-1800 under the direction of George Butler and his grandson, Robert Butler, who held the Ballyragget estates during that period, roughly. Within that period were built Butler House—now the Hotel—the old Chapel, the old Parochial House and Ballyragget Lodge, now the Convent. In 1801 Ballyragget had 214 houses, mostly cabins, a brewery and two distilleries. In 1847 there were 1629 persons in Ballyragget occupying about 300 houses.

THE CASTLE.

Ballyragget Castle is a rectangular keep, standing in the centre of a rectangular court or baun. The court is surrounded by a 15ft. high wall, the alure being 9ft. high and the wall being 4ft. thick up to that height. There is a 6ft. crenellated and looped parapet. Four round towers, one at each corner of the baun, serve as bartazans. The towers have an entrance from the alure and are looped to command the outside of the walls. There are two entrance gates, guarded by loops. The west gate is further pro-

tected by being placed in a recess, flanked by looped side walls and having a mochicolation resting on corbels overhead. The east gate is at present incomplete. The gates are so placed in the walls that they are in line with the corners of the keep diagonally thereby standing centrally in the field of fire covered by the embrasured corner loops of the keep.

The keep is five storied, the fourth storey being vaulted. The roof is in perfect condition. The feature of the castle that is of most interest to visitors is the look-out turret that rises above the parapet in the north east corner of the keep. At present it is known as the "wishing chair." Formerly it was known as "Mairgead's Chair" because it was reputed to have been the favoured watch tower and belvedere of Mairgead Ni Ghearoid—the builder of the castle.

During the Penal Laws against Catholics the Catholic Butlers of Ballyragget allowed the watch tower to be used as a look-out for fear of "red-coats," while Mass was being celebrated in the south east tower of the bawn, and the congregation knelt outside around the tower.

A moat formerly surrounded the bawn. Remains of the moat may still be seen outside the north wall. The large room under the attic-room was the state-room. It was the finest room in the castle. It was renovated in 1591 and a stone mantle was placed around the fire-place. The date of the renovation is carved on the mantle together with the initials of the authoress of the renovation. The initials are G.M., which denote Grissel or Granny Mountgarret, wife of Edmund 2nd Viscount Mountgarret, and daughter of Fitzpatrick, formerly Gillpatrick first Baron of Upper Ossory.

The castle was built about 1495 and, coinciding with the invention of gunpowder, may be considered a late comer among Kilkenny's 200 odd castles. The builder of the castle is given as Mairgead Ni Ghearoid who is stated to have been a great builder of castles.

MAIRGEAD NI GHEAROID.

Mairgead Ni Ghearoid was daughter of Gearoid Mor, the Great Earl of Kildare, of whom King Henry VII. said: "If all Ireland cannot rule this man than he shall rule all Ireland." Mairgead was wife of Pierce Rua, Earl of Ormond, who did his utmost, having the sympathetic ear of Cardinal Wolsey to sabotage the power of his father-in-law and later of his brother-in-law, Garret Og, who were Lord Deputies of Ireland. Pierce Rua succeeded in having himself appointed Lord Deputy, for a short time, but this only helped to fan the fierce enmity that existed between Geraldines and Butlers.

Stonyhurst says of Mairgead:—

"The Earl was of himself a plain simple gentleman and yet, nevertheless, he bore out his charge of government very worthily through the singular wisdom of his wife, a lady of such port that

all the estates of the realm crouched unto her, so politick that nothing was substantially debated without her advice. She was man-like and tall of stature . . . a sure friend, a bitter enemy, very liberal and bountiful, hardly disliking where she fancied and not easily fancying where she disliked."

In folklore she is pictured as frequently making war upon her neighbours, riding to battle, at the head of her vassals, in richly ornamented trappings, and always coming home victorious. Later legend tried to explain her prowess by associating her with witchcraft. X

Her fighting qualities she inherited from her father the Great Earl. In her rich trappings we may see a reflection of her nephew, Silken Thomas. And, perhaps, in the secondary position to which she relegated her husband we may see something of the superior attitude that the Geraldines would like to have felt towards the Ormondes.

Mairgead Ni Ghearoid, Countess of Ormonde, had the Ballyragget and Balleen portions of the Ormonde estates settled on her second son, Richard, who was made first Viscount Mountgarret of Ballyragget Castle. "Mountgarret" is explained as "Moat-Garret" so that the title too commemorates this Medieval Macha whose favourite dwelling was Ballyragget Castle. In "mount" and "moat" we get a hint of the origins of stone castles.

MOTES AND MOATS.

Mote is often applied to the mound, usually higher than the Irish rath, on which the Normans built their early wooden castles such as the original castles at Castlecomer, Three Castles and Clogh. Moat strictly means the water-filled trench that warded the Norman Castle and Mote. The association of "mote" and "moat" with mound became confused so that when we speak of the Moat in Moat Park and the Moat at Three Castles we mean the mound at these places.

Our Danish raths or mounds such as the rath at Dunmore caves, were dwelling places, but the Celtic raths, being older, were either dwelling places, burial places or temples to the gods or any or all of the three combined.

Natural hills were dedicated to the gods and were adapted to burials and dwellings. Ardaloo was a temple to the Firblog god, Lugaid (Lewy) but was also successively the burial place of Ruman Duach (grandfather of St. Kieran), a Gaelic fortress (Heremons fortress) and the site of one of the first Norman castles.

If we accept that the Fianna were deities in Celtic mythology, then the hills Fermoy (Formaol na bhFian) and Brandra (Brandra na bhFian), in the north of Ballyragget parish, are temples of pagan gods. The "giant graves" in the locality lend credence to this interpretation.

Carnduff, now Toor Hill, north of Ballyragget, was a burial place. The many raths near Ballyragget, such as Grange and Rathdug, were dwelling places. All our raths are correctly associated with spirits and ghosts because they have been the habitats of humans or contain their bones, or have been dedicated to pagan deities.

Rathbeagh (Rath Beathaigh i.e. Birch Rath) has been described as the site of the palace of the legendary King Heremon and also the place of his burial. Heremon represents Gaels or Gauls and hence the legends of Rathbeagh represent the infiltration of the Gaels into the Nore valley from the south coast of Ireland, where they had landed centuries previously at about 50 B.C. The legend of the usurpation of Ossory by Munster kings is a further elaboration of the spreading of the Gae's into Ossory.

The "mote" in Moat Park was the site of the earliest wooden Norman castle in Ballyragget. There was an intermediate castle in the 13th and 14th centuries but its site must have been on or near that of the present castle. There is no evidence of a stone castle having been built, as was done in Castlecomer, on the mound in Moat Park and, in any case, the mound is of too sandy a nature to support a stone castle. The old name of this mound was Tuillabarry. Tuillabarry was also the ancient name of Ballyragget as Tuillabarry included the present site of Ballyragget. The history of Tuillabarry will provide a background of ancient history to the medieval history that can be developed around the castle of Ballyragget.

TULLABARRY.

Tullabarry was the ancient name applied primarily, as we have seen, to the mound called Moat and was extended to the surrounding districts of Moat Park and Ballyragget. The name is in Irish: Tulach Ut mBairrche i.e. "The Mound of Ui Bairrche." The name Ui Bairrche carries us well back into pre-historic times.

Plotemy places the Ui Bairrche in Wexford, under the tribe name Brigantes. Their ancestors, called Belgae by Caesar, had spread to England from the Rhine and the Meuse about 700 B.C. The Irish Bards, knowing their history, called them Builg (Belgae) or Firbolg.

In Ireland, these Brigantes, alias Firbolg alias Ui Bairrche spread from Wexford up the east coast and along the valleys of the Slaney, Barrow, Nore and Suir. To this day their name is applied to the Mourne Mountains (Beanna Bairrche, to the Leix-Carlow-Kilkenny border Slievemargy (Sliabh mBairrche), to the barony of Slievemargy in Leix and to Tullabarry at Ballyragget.

AIRGID ROS.

The legends of Heremon give us some insight into the history of the Gaail. We are told that Heremon erected a palace at Rath-

beagh and a fortress at Threecastles. The hill at Threecastles had previously been dedicated to the Firbolg god, Lugaid (Lewy Mac Con). The Gaels called the valley of Rathbeagh from Durrow to Three Castles, Airgid Ros i.e. The Plain of Silver. Silver was in ancient times found and used extensively in this area. We are told that Eauna Airgtheach—Eauna of The Silver—made silver shields for his men in this locality.

The Ui Bairrche were chiefs of Aergid Ros from time immemorial. When the Gaels settled in Airgid Ros the Ui Bairrche were temporarily ousted from chieftainship and the district became known as Ui Duach i.e. the People of Dui or Dauí. Dauí was a personal name in Pagan and early Christian Ireland. The name was also applied to a Pagan deity for "Dar Duach" is the equivalent of "By Jove!"

UI DUACH.

Ui Duach is variously written: Hy Duach, Edough, Idough, Ideiff, Odagh, etc. The old name is still preserved in Odagh near Three Castles and Firoda, near Castlecomer. The extent of Ui Duach coincided, very closely, with that part of the basin of the Nore which is drained by the section of the river that lies between Durrow and Three Castles. The territory of Ui Duach was hemmed in by the Slievemargy and Coolcashin ranges, whose foothills converge at the junction of the Nore and the Dinan.

This ancient cantred forms for us a convenient link between Firbolg and Gaels and between Paganism and Christianity. The ancestor of Ui Duach was Duach Cliach who led the Munster or Gaelic conquest of Airgid Ros. Christianity came to Ui Duach in the wake of the Munster infiltration, chiefly through the missionary efforts of St. Ciaran who was a contemporary of St. Patrick. St. Patrick consolidated the work of Ciaran and is credited with the founding of a number of churches in Ossory, chief of these being Donoughmore i.e. Domhnach Mor at Ballyragget.

DONOUGHMORE.

Domhnach Mor means "great Sunday" and was the name commonly applied to churches founded by St. Patrick because he chose the Lord's Day (Dominica Deis) to consecrate churches and the consecration was usually attended by great multitudes. The ruin at Donoughmore is partly pre-Norman and partly 15th century. Interesting features of the structure are the cyclopean masonry and part of a Celtic doorway in the north wall and the "clock stone" in the west wall.

The church was taken over at the Reformation and was in use until 1747. Within the church and graveyard are monuments to the Ballyragget families of Butler, Purcell, Cleere, Gorman, White

and Bradshaw. The Butler monument, within the church commemorates the founders of Ballyragget town, who were the parents of Dr. James Butler, author of the Catechism still in use in revised form in the Diocese of Ossory.

DANES IN UI DUACH.

In 852, Carroll, famous King of Ossory, made many attacks on the Danish fleet and armies. At Ballamuicca—the junction of Ballynaslee and Ballyconra on the Nore—Carroll defeated Rodolph, chief of the Danes of Slievemargy. Finally, in 873, Carroll became King of the Danes of Dublin and remained their king until his death in 885. One of his daughters was mother of Sigurd and wove the raven flag carried by Sigurd at the Battle of Clontarf.

Carroll was father of Brennan, ancestor of Ui Braonain i.e. The O'Brenans, who acquired chieftainship of Ui Duach in the 10th century and held that chieftainship until they were driven by the Normans from the Nore valley section of Ui Duach into the Dinan valley and surrounding hills where they maintained the Gaelic order until the plantation of Castlecomer in 1637.

CASTELLATION.

During the 13th and 14th centuries various Norman names appear in the granting and disposing of the territories of the upper plain of the Nore. Ballyragget retains the name of Richard de la Ragged. Subsequently these lands passed to Peter the Red, Earl of Ormond and hence became the property of the Mountgarrets of Ballyragget. Most of our stone castles were built during this period, including the predecessor of Ballyragget Castle. We have seen that the present Ballyragget Castle is late fifteenth century.

MORE IRISH THAN THE IRISH THEMSELVES.

The Mountgarrets of Ballyragget seemed to inherit from Mairgead Ni Ghearoid the fiery independence of the Geraldines. The stock accusation of the enemies of the Geraldines, during the Tudor campaign to break the power of the Irish and Anglo-Irish chiefs, was that they had broken the Statute of Kilkenny. The Mountgarrets seem to have nearly always taken the Old Irish point of view. During the nine years war of O'Neill and O'Donnell statistics of Co. Kilkenny's "rebel forces of foote and horse employed in the rebellion, April 1599" are "Viscount Mountgarret with his brethern and followers, the O'Carrolls, 130 foote and 20 horse."

Edmund, second Viscount Mountgarret died 1602. His sons had been in open rebellion against Queen Elizabeth so that the castle of Ballyragget was warded to the Queen in 1600. The Mountgarrets tried, unsuccessfully, to re-occupy the castle which from this time

until the restoration of Charles II. continued to be occupied by the forces of England.

One of the three chief leaders of the Munster rebels in the rebellion of 1641 was Richard 3rd Viscount Mountgarret. Richard Mountgarret opposed the spoliation of the Castle of Comer, occupied by Richard Butler, and of the territory around the castle, occupied by the O'Brennans. He acted as interpreter to the Brennans and pleaded, in the English courts, the claims of the Brennans to the title of their lands. These titles are confirmed but the Brennans were ejected and the plantation of Castlecomer accomplished by the horse and foot of "Black Tom The Tyrant," Earl of Strafford. Richard's first wife was the daughter of Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone. The following incident further illustrates the confidential relations that existed between the Mountgarrets, the O'Moores of Leix and O'Neill. These three families formed the bridge between the Old Irish order in North and South and between the Geraldine Confederations and the Confederation of Kilkenny.

CAPTURE OF THE EARL OF ORMOND.

In 1600 Thomas Dubh, Earl of Ormond, nephew of Richard first Viscount Mountgarret, was chief commander of the Queen's forces in Ireland. In the Spring of 1600 the Earls of Ormond and Thomond set out from Limerick, along the Suir, in pursuit of O'Neill, but failing to contact him they came to Kilkenny where they stayed during Easter. When the solemnities of Easter were over they went to Dublin to welcome and pay their respects to the new officers who had arrived in Ireland: Lord Mountjoy, as Chief Justice, and Sir George Carew, as President of Munster. Then the Earls returned to Kilkenny accompanied by Carew.

Not long after this a day was appointed between Ormond and Owny, son of Rory Og O'More to come to a conference. Ormond, accompanied by Carew and Thomond, and a number of men armed with swords and pistols arrived from Kilkenny, on drays, at the appointed meeting place, Carnduff, now Toor Hill, at the Seven Cross-roads between Castlecomer and Ballyragget. O'More arrived accompanied by the Jesuit Archer, to act as interpreter and a body-guard armed with scians and pikes. The negotiations ended in a fracas in which Ormond was wounded and captured, while Thomond and Carew fled to Kilkenny.

During his captivity, Ormond was, at first, moved each night from one cabin to another in Leix, guarded by bonaghs or hired soldiers, whom O'Neill had left with O'More, when making his circuit of Ireland, a few months previously. For greater safety he was then removed to Fitzpatrick's castle at Gortnaclea from which place Ormond wrote to Carew suggesting the terms of his ransom. Finally he was moved to O'Dempsey's castle at Baltinglas and

from here his ransom was effected by the payment of a goodly sum to O'More and the giving of guarantees that no reprisals would be visited on O'More, but the guarantees availed him little for in the following August, Mountjoy invaded O'Moore's territory, slew O'Moore, spoiled and burned the corn and houses and drove away the cattle, sheep and goats.

The descendants of the bonaghs who captured and guarded Ormond are still to be found among the families of O'Neills and Maguires that live at Sraid, formerly Sraid na n-Ultach, or "Ulster Village" in the parish of Clogh.

Thomas Dubh was re-converted to the Catholic faith before his death due, it is said, to the persuasion exerted by the Jesuit Archer, during Ormond's imprisonment at Gortnaclea.

CONFEDERATION OF KILKENNY.

The Confederation of Kilkenny was the third of a series of confederations that began in the Tudor period with the object of staying the collapse of Norman-Irish Ireland. The failure of the Confederation of Kilkenny achieved the purpose of the Statute of Kilkenny. Next year, 1648, will conclude the third centenary of Ireland's first limited republic, which dissolved itself after signing the Ormond Peace in May, 1648. The Confederation of Kilkenny was the immediate outcome of the Rebellion of 1641, in which, we have seen, Richard Viscount Mountgarret took a leading part. He was chosen in 1642 as President of the Supreme Council of the Confederation and in this capacity was President of Ireland from 1642 to 1648.

The Confederate War ended with the surrender of Galway, the last Confederate stronghold, in 1652. In that year also Mountgarret died. There was a price of £300 on his head, dead or alive. As his friends were anxious to save his corpse from Cromwellian mutilation the circumstances of his death and the place of his burial have never been made known. During the palmy days of his presidency he had erected to himself a tomb in St. Canice's Cathedral, Kilkenny, inscribed with the incomplete date 16—. The date is still incomplete.

Mountgarret's estates had been marked out for confiscation under a scheme, outlined by the Earl of Cork, in 1642, for the extirpation of the Catholic gentry of the South. Cromwell enlarged on the scheme to include Protestant loyalists, not excluding the Earl of Ormond. The castle and estates of Ballyragget were handed over to Ponsonby, ancestor of the Earls of Bessborough. Ponsonby exchanged with Axtell who was officer of the guard that supervised the execution of King Charles I. While in Ballyragget castle, Axtell entertained himself by hanging Catholics and Protestant Royalists, using as a gallows a lime tree, that was still growing in the last century, in the Fair Green of Ballyragget. At the restoration of

Charles II. Axtell was himself hanged, drawn and quartered at Tyburn.

Richard Mountgarret's son, Edmund Rua, 4th Viscount Mountgarret, also took an active part in the Confederation of Kilkenny. He was living at Parksgrove in 1630 and died in 1679. He transferred the Ballyragget estates to his son, Colonel Ed. Butler who was the first of the "Catholic Butlers of Ballyragget." The Mountgarret branch of the family subsequently lived at Ballyconra House.

TORIES.

Following the Cromwellian spoliations a number of the dispossessed Irish went "underground" and sabotaged the property of the Cromwellian planters. These saboteurs were called "tories" which is an Irish term that primarily means "pursuers." The Priest, the Tory, and the Wolf were the three most hunted creatures in Ireland in the century following Cromwell. Many of the tories had to seek existence as highway men. Most of them sought liberation in the Jacobite movement. Dispossessed Jacobites, in turn, went underground under the name of Raparees.

These movements are covered in North Kilkenny by the activities of the "Brennan Tories" and "The Kellymount Gang." The 18th century "Freney the Robber" was an offshoot of the Kellymount Gang. The activities of these gangs were later enshrined in song and story in particular in "Brennan on the Moor" and the autobiography "Life and Adventures of Freney the Robber." The latter was used as a text book in the hedge schools of South Kilkenny.

The Tories had their hide-outs in the hills and woods adjoining their former properties. The Tory Brennans were Tall James Brennan and Little James Brennan from Croghtenclogh, and Patrick Brennan from Killeshin, these districts being in the Slieve-margy boundary of Ui Duach. The Brennans had been dispossessed from the Dinan Valley of Ui Duach by both the Castlecomer plantation and the Cromwellian plantations.

In June, 1633, Alexander Marshall of Lisburn and two other merchants were riding from Ballinakill to Kilcullen along Cromwell's road—near Ballyragget. They were overtaken at Ballyragget Heath—Ballymartin Bog—by the three Brennans, well mounted and armed with pistols, swords and carbines. They knocked the merchants off their horses, dragged them into the old fort, and there robbed them of goods and money to the value of £100.

The three Brennans became very wealthy, having accumulated upwards of £20,000 and seem to have had a way with jailers, executioners and government officials. They had been convicted and brought to the gallows for execution but they made their

escape. Eventually Chief Justice Keating kept so close on their heels that they resolved to get out of the country and they arrived at Ringsend, the chief place of departure of vessels from Dublin. They were traced to Dublin by the trail of robberies that they left in their wake but, in spite of Keating's spies, they boarded the Doggor boat while she was under sail, leaving their horses to be brought after them, by their boy, and money to be sent to London by their Dublin landlord, who denied all knowledge of them when questioned.

Arrived in England, they were recognised in Chichester by Marshall, whom they had robbed at Ballyragget. They were arrested and imprisoned. At the time of their capture they wore swords and according to Ormond "were in greater splendour than any of their race."

Having spent two days in Chester jail they made their escape. The jailer, Richard Wright, deposed, in October, 1683, that he had received in custody, charged with the highway robbery of Marshall, at Ballyragget: Tall James Brennan, Little James Brennan and Patrick Brennan. He kept them in irons during the day and took away their clothes when they retired at night. While he and his wife were having supper the Brennans being well ironed in the hall, Tall James spoke in Irish to the other two where upon Little James drew a knife and struck at his (Wright's) throat and wounded him in the arm as he tried to protect himself. Little James then stamped upon him (Wright) with his knees until he promised to be quiet. Patrick secured Mrs. Wright and went upstairs to the jailer's closet where he provided himself with the jailer's keys and a sword. With the keys he loosed their fetters and then taking the gate keys from the jailer's pocket they proceeded to let themselves free. On their way to the main door they assured the maid, Mary Swettenham, that they intended her no harm, one of the three confirming the assurance with the solicitation: "Sweetheart, you and I, it may be, may meet again." "In another country then," said she.

The Lord Deputy, the Earl of Arran, doubted the jailer's story and suspected bribery. The hue and cry was raised but the Brennan's succeeded in making their way back to Ireland. In September, 1685, they broke into Ormond's Castle in Kilkenny, and removed a considerable quantity of silver plate.

On the accession of James II. in 1685 the general outlook for Ireland seemed brighter. The Brennans were pardoned and were granted the use of their horses and their firearms, free of arrest on condition that they return the Ormond plate and that they assist in quelling the activities of other Tories. The general leniency, at this time, towards the Tories secured their affection for the Jacobite cause and gave a new word to English politics where "Tories" was first applied to the conservatives who did not wish

to have James II removed from the English throne because of his religion.

JACOBITES

The families of the Purcells, Brennans and Butlers, in Ui Duach, are listed among the Jacobites of Kilkenny county. Richard, 5th Viscount Mountgarret and his brother, Colonel Edward Butler, are prominent among the Butlers.

Colonel Edward Butler acquired Ballyragget castle and estates from his father who died in 1679. Colonel Edward was ancestor of the "Butlers of Ballyragget." In 1689 he raised a regiment of dragoons which he commanded in the Jacobite army. Among his officers were Lieutenant Simon Cleere of Donoughmore; Lieutenant John Brennan of Loon, and Corporal Edward Purcell.

In 1691 Colonel Edward was captured by the Williamites, outlawed, and his estates declared forfeit, but in 1692 the outlawry was reversed and Colonel Edward continued to occupy his estates. The Purcells lost their estates. The part taken by the Brennans was used as a pretext to finally disallow their titles to their estates and to refuse to grant the compensation willed to them by Sir Christopher Wandesford before his death in 1640.

In 1813 the Butler estates of Ballyragget became the property of the McMurrough Kavanaghs of Borris, who were a branch of the descendants of Dermot McMurrough and Art McMurrough Kavanagh. The Kavanaghs were prominent among the Jacobites and Wild Geese. Colonel Charles Kavanagh and five other officers of the Kavanaghs were in the army of James II. After the Williamite wars the younger families of the Kavanaghs of Borris and Ballyleigh went to France and Germany as soldiers of the Wild Geese. Count Charles Kavanagh of Borris was a general in the Austrian Service and Governor of Prague in 1766. Thomas Kavanagh of Ballyragget and of Borris was an officer in the Austrian service in the Low Countries.

John Baptist Kavanagh, who was living in 1774, was enobled in Bohemia with the title of Baron of Ginditz.

WHITEBOYS.

Colonel Edward Butler died in 1691. Like his predecessor, Mountgarret, President of the Confederation of Kilkenny, his death coincided with the collapse of the cause that he had championed. His death, at this time, probably provided a way out from the confiscation of his estates and secured them, in succession to his sons, Edmund Butler, who died 1696 and George Butler who died in 1752.

George Butler financed the building of Butler House in 1730. His son, James Butler, predeceased him and lies buried with his wife within the old church at Donoughmore. James Butler was father

of Robert Butler who died in London in 1783. Dr. James Butler, Archbishop of Cashel, who died in 1791, and George Butler who died at Staffordshire in 1813. Robert Butler occupied the Ballyragget estates until his death. After his death they were managed by his brothers, Dr. James Butler and Robert Butler. Robert was the last of the Ballyragget Butlers and he transferred his estates to his cousin, Thomas Kavanagh of Borris, who died in 1837.

Robert Butler built the old chapel of Ballyragget, the old parochial house in 1750, and had just completed Ballyragget Lodge, now the Convent, before his death in 1788. He is probably best remembered as instigator of the Anti-Whiteboy League formed at Ballyragget.

The Whiteboys were an association of young farmers whose original purpose was to fight against tithes and the exactions of landlords such as enclosures and unfair rents. Robert Butler, landlord of Ballyragget, exerted himself so much against them that he had to fly to England. During his absence an Anti-Whiteboy League was formed at Ballyragget. Ballyragget castle was at this time occupied by the military who were stationed in the district to deal with Whiteboy disturbances. The members of the league were supplied with arms by the government and were given a military training by a local ex-soldier.

The league pursued the Whiteboys and spied on them and exasperated them to such an extent that they decided to burn Ballyragget. From Durrow to Gowran and from Freshford to Callan they assembled at the Green of Rathbeagh at midnight on the 21st February, 1775. They approached Ballyragget before dawn on the morning of the 22nd.

They numbered 300 horsemen and 200 foot, all dressed in white and carrying a white bag attached to a pole. Some carried lighted sods of turf.

The league assembled at Butler House. The Whiteboys came over the Nore bridge and proceeding through the Square, Moat Street, The Green and Patrick Street, took up positions opposite Butler House. The Whiteboy captain challenged the league by discharging a musket ball through a window of Butler House. The league replied with musket slugs and balls, killing a number of the Whiteboys, who retreated, leaving two of their dead on The Square. The retreat of such a large number was most probably effected by the castle military.

BRENNAN'S ACADEMY.

On the border of the townland of Castlemarket is Academy Cross, and a small part of the ruins of the academy from which the cross gets its name. The academy was founded in 1810 by Mr. Jer Brennan who died at Grove, Castlemarket. He expended £4,000 on his residence and then advertised it as a school. He

announced accommodation for 180 students. The advertisement styled the school as a "Classical, Merchantile and Mathematical School to teach subjects for the University, Maynooth, the Army, Navy, Compting House, Revenue, etc."

Drawing, dancing, music and fencing were taught as extra by visiting teachers.

The fee in 1810 was 22 guineas a year. In 1811 this fee was raised to 30 guineas. Day pupils paid one guinea entrance fee and one guinea per quarter.

The president, Rev. Dr. James Keeler, was in partnership with Mr. Brennan. The school ran into debt and was discontinued after ten years.

It may be noted here that Rev. Mervyn Archrall, who compiled *Monasticon Hibernicum*, a work on Irish monasteries, was rector of Attanagh, which is close to Castlemarket. This work was edited and annotated by his Eminence Cardinal Moran in 1873 while he was Bishop of Ossory.

LAND LEAGUE MEETING AT BALLYRAGGET.

A monster meeting was held at Ballyragget in 1881 under the auspices of the Land League. The meeting was presided over by the Rev. Nicholas Murphy who had been born near Carrickshock, scene of the well known Co. Kilkenny Tithe War battle in 1831.

The meeting was addressed among others by Rev. Fr. Pat Delaney who remarked: "The last speaker has stated that Co. Kilkenny never took part in the national struggle or the fight for the land. Well, he forgot Carrickshock!"

This remark drew cheers from the great assembly but was otherwise unfortunate for the Inspector in charge of the police at Ballyragget on that day was a son of one of the eleven policemen killed at Carrickshock.

As the meeting was breaking up the surging crowd followed the bands towards the railway station but the police drew a cordon across the street. The cordon was naturally broken by the crowd and the Inspector ordered a bayonet charge. When one man, Mansfield from Rathkyle had been fatally bayoneted the Rev. Chairman prevailed on the police Inspector to stay the bayonetting. At the subsequent coroner's inquest a verdict of murder was brought against the police.

RETURN OF THE GAELS.

When George, the last of the Butlers of Ballyragget died in 1831, he left his estates to his cousin, Thomas McMurrough Kavanagh of Borris. The last McMurrough Kavanagh, by name, to occupy Ballyragget Lodge, was Major Arthur Thomas McMurrough Kavanagh. In 1945 he was listed in the genealogical office as "The

Murchadha" chief of the ancient clan of O'Murchadha.

Major Arthur's daughter, Joan, married in 1936, Gerald, Marquess of Kildare, thereby returning a Geraldine to this ancient seat that had been founded by the daughter of the greatest of the Geraldines. The Marquess and Marchioness continued the occupation of Ballyragget Lodge until the outbreak of the recent World War. During their occupation the baun of the castle was used to kennel the hounds of the well known North Kilkenny Hunt.

Last year the castle and grounds and Ballyragget Lodge were disposed of to Mr. Carey who has brought new life to the baun with his "Castle Hatchery." Mr. Carey's wife is a Brennan so that the historical focus is still being aligned. The tradition of the chieftainship of Ui Duach is further maintained in "The O'Erean" of Eden Hall, Ballyragget.

The history of Ballyragget is milestoned by: Firbolg Tullabarry, Gaelic Rathbeagh, Pagan Carnduff, Patrician Rosconnell and Donoughmore, the Danish connections of Lowhill and Killmainan, the Norman-Irish Castle, Butler House, Ballyconra, The Lodge, Cromwell's Road and place names ranging from Fermoyle and Brandra na bhFian to Academy Cross and the New Houses.